

Madame Speaker, today I am proud to discuss H.Res. 114, the National Girls and Women in Sports Day, which I introduced. Dedication, teamwork, discipline, courage, victory, and overcoming defeat can all be learned by participating in sports.

Athletics are one of the best opportunities for personal growth, and yet there has not always been an equal opportunity for everyone to participate.

In 1971, only 300,000 women participated in high school sports and fewer than 32,000 competed in college sports. Thanks in large part to Title IX, opportunities for girls and women to participate in sports have expanded, so that today ten times the more women participate in high school sports and five times as many participate in college sports than in 1971. However, we still have a long way to go. High school women still receive 1,300,000 fewer opportunities to participate than do boys, and the money spent on women's sports is far less than that spent on boys' sports.

National Girls and Women in Sports Day exists to overcome the final barriers for women in sports by celebrating female athletes' achievements, acknowledging the positive influence of sports participation in women's lives, and urging equality and access for women in sports. On February 4, 2009, the 23<sup>rd</sup>

National Girls and Women in Sports Day was celebrated in schools and communities across the country.

The Stevens Institute of Technology, in my district, recognized a woman, who truly embodies the ideals of National Girls and Women in Sports Day. Emily Woo, a senior chemical biology major at one of the most demanding scientific institutions in the country, is an athlete, scholar, and leader. She boasts a 3.6 cumulative grade point average in a demanding major.

She holds five different school swimming records and has been captain of the women's swimming team for two years.

As if that were not enough, her coach credits her with turning the swimming program around and being the best leader he has ever encountered.

Emily Woo exemplifies the benefits of participation in sports. When girls and women participate, they are more likely to get better grades in school and are more likely to graduate.

As little as four hours of exercise a week from sports activities may reduce a girl's risk of breast cancer, osteoporosis and obesity.

Most importantly, when girls and women play sports, they have a more positive body image, higher levels of confidence, and are more likely to develop self-discipline, initiative, and leadership skills.

National Girls and Women in Sports Day, an event sponsored by the National Girls and Women in Sports Coalition, increases awareness of the importance sports play in the lives of girls and women. I introduced this resolution to support the goals and ideals of this important day and to encourage schools and communities to continue and increase opportunities for girls and women in sports.

As a former athlete, I know firsthand the benefits of competing in sports; my life is richer and more well-rounded because of those experiences.

Everyone regardless of background should have equal access to sports, and I commend the National Girls and Women in Sports Coalition for their work to give everyone a chance to play.